A

Research Proposal

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CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH AUTOBIOGRAPHY: A CRITICAL SURVEY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECT TEXTS

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Introduction

Autobiography means a narrative of a person's life based on her/his memory by herself or himself. The word autobiography derived from the three Greek words, autos, bios and self. Smith and Watson state the definition of autobiography, the description (graphia) of an individual human life (bios) by the individual himself (quots). The term autobiography was first used in English periodical the monthly review in 1797 by William Taylor.Though the term autobiography was coined in the eighteenth century, the genre had been in practice from the Greek Literature. There are some conflicts too regarding its origin. Robert Southey used it in its present sense in 1809. Sappho, Herodotus and Xonophon are among several poets and historians of the classical period who wrote about their own lives. Saint Augustine's Confessions consisting of thirteen books was the first autobiography written in Latin between AD 397 and 400. It was an account of spiritual experience and an extraordinary instance of self-exploration. It is widely observed as the first Western autobiography ever written and was an influential model for Christian writers throughout Middle Ages. Autobiography has been a largely western tradition. The autobiographer looks to his life from the beginning till the present. In English, D'Israeli speaks of "self-biography". Taylor, a critic of D'Israelisuggested it as "autobiography". Autobiography is not a historiography or biography but beyond that it enquires into someone's identity and its improving track. Autobiography is understood by both its authors and its readers to be exemplary, as a reliable and true portrayal of a life which others can learn.

Nowadays it is recognized as a major literary form. Autobiography is a biography written with the subject of himself or herself. It is to be distinguished from the memoir, in which the emphasis is not on the author's developing self but on the people and events that the author has known or witnessed and also from the private diary or journal which is day-to-day record of the events in one's life, written for personal use and satisfaction,

with little or no thought of publication." In simple words it means life writing. It is a platform to make our own life accessible for public audience. This kind of life writing helps for the self-exposure to the natural instinct of human nature. It gives a complete intellectual satisfaction to the writers. Great autobiographies are always helpful and inspiring to the generation. It is the purest form of emotions and experiences connected to self. In this process of writing an autobiography the writer himself can witness the things that take place in his own life. Although autobiography shares some features with some other types of writing like memoir, confession, diary journal, travelogue, letters and biography, its main focus is the man/woman, himself/herself who writes it to portray the growth and development of his/her personality.

The present study aims to focus light on the selected Indian autobiographies. These autobiographies are chosen from different areas. An attempt will be made to know what made these people write autobiographies and the usefulness for all others. It is quite clear that in some or the other way they will enlighten the people of not only India but also the whole world.

Significance of the Study

Autobiography has a philosophical dignity and is the highest and most instructive form in which the understanding of life comes before us. Autobiographies can be considered as research processes through which lives are remembered, reconstructed and written. The purpose of an autobiography is to give the readers a first-hand account into the life of the person you are reading about and to give you a better insight into how their experiences have shaped them as a person. As a form of literature, autobiography has its own distinctive features. The proposed research work entitled Contemporary Indian English Autobiography: A Critical Survey with Special Reference to Select Texts will prove significant and innovative in understanding Indian history, rituals, tradition, culture and unity. It will also focus on the freedom and right given to one and all Indians to voice and express views, experiences and emotions by our world's strongest constitution. This survey will be very fruitful for students and general readers. The research will really enhance the understanding of common people especially those interested in reading autobiographies. We are always depend on someone or somebody and that someone will be a role model or idol for us. In this sense too I want to prove that these Indian English

autobiographies will be role models for shaping this society and humanity. There are many Indian English autobiographies written by some great personalities but I have made a choice and this choice of autobiographical texts is made from different fields. On the whole, it can be said that these autobiographies will be the beacon light in our life. They will make our life easy, comfortable, worth-living and successful. Those who will go through these autobiographies will find more and better opportunities in life. They too will feel confident and courageous for doing some extraordinary, creative and novel activities.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

In order to do a critical study of the autobiographies, the research shall attempt to:

- To know the intention and purpose of each text, whether it is written to inform, persuade and inspire.
- To evaluate the selected texts which have different background such as science, sports, politics, literature, army, administration, family values, social work, film, entertainment etc.
- To interpret the thoughts, feelings and messages given in the texts by autobiographers.
- To study the role of memory in building 'self '.
- To study the role of experience in the making of autobiography.
- To identify the problems and challenges faced by these autobiographers in the journey of their life.
- To compare and contrast these selected autobiographies to know the depth of utility in day- to-day life operations.

Hypothesis

The present study is based on the following hypothesis:

- There is a comprehensive account of problems, challenges, pains and struggle experienced in the lives of these autobiographers.
- Present status of these autobiographers in the society, country and the universe is significant.
- The stories and all other experiences of these autobiographers reflected in texts will persuade and guide readers to make our society, nation and universe livable, joyful, peaceful and successful.
- Self evaluation and will for exposure in human nature exists since the birth of human being.
- The selected texts are the representatives of their time, culture, tradition, impressions, situations and values.
- All the selected autobiographical texts unveil the strategic journey of attainment of successes of these authors.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The present research work, 'Contemporary Indian English Autobiography: A Critical Survey of the Select Texts' at a broader level will see these autobiographies as a genre of literature but the study would have certain limitations. It is comparative, analytical and interpretative in nature. Analysis of the autobiographies from the context of utility at the present moment will be done. It has an ample scope to evaluate the thoughts, feelings, problems and psychology of these autobiographers. It is somewhat challenging to come down to the specific generalization about the different autobiographers. In one or the other way the human emotions, problems, feelings and ambitions are the same hence scope for analysis and comparison is immense as far as the proposed research work is concerned. There are many popular Indian English

autobiographies but for the sake of convenience of the present study, the following autobiographies have been selected.

1. *The Wings of Fire* by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (1999)

2. *Playing It My Way* by Sachin Tendulkar (2014)

3. My Country My Life by L. K. Advani (2008)

4. *On My Terms: From the Grassroots to Corriodors of Power* by Sharad Pawar (2015)

5. *Truth, Love & a Little Malice* by Khushwant Singh (2002)

6. *Once Upon a Life: Burnt Curry and Bloody Rags: A Memoir* by Temsula Ao *(2014)*

7. Courage and Conviction by V.K. Singh (2013)

8. *One Full, One Half* by Neela Satyanarayan (2006)

9. The Substance and the Shadow by Dilip Kumar (2014)

10. *Romancing with Life* by Dev Anand (2011)

A Review of the Selected Autobiographies

1. *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (1999)

It is written by the former President of India, Dr. Kalam. He shows his childhood, efforts, hardships, luck and an opportunity that he got to lead Indian space research, missile and all other nuclear programmes. After graduation in Aerospace engineering at NIT, Chennai, he began his career at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and was given task to craft a hovercraft prototype. He also served in ISRO and decided to establish the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre and took an initiative to start the first space launch-vehicle programme. During the 1990s and early 2000, he moved to DRDO to lead the Indian nuclear weapons programme. This autobiography has been translated in major Indian languages and into foreign languages such as Chinese and French. Kalam died on 27 July, 2015 during a speech at Indian Institute of Management in Shillong, Meghalaya.

2. *Playing It My Way* by Sachin Tendulkar (2014)

It is an autobiography of former Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar. It was released on 5 Nov., 2014 in Hachette India, Mumbai. The book exhibits Tendulkar's early days, his 24 years of international cricket career and many other aspects that have been made public. Its sale was satisfactory hence it entered the Limca Book of Records across both fiction and non-fiction categories. He is the greatest run-scorer in the history of cricket. He is honored with India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna Award. He tells his own remarkable story from his first test cap at the age of 16 to his 100th international century. He was the corner stone of India's batting line-up, his every move watched by cricket-mad nation's devoted followers. He achieved the World Cup in 2001 and topped the world test rankings. Despite his celebrity and fame status, he has always remained a very private man, devoted to his family and his country. Now through his autobiography he provides a fascinating insight into his personal life and gives a frank and revealing account. There are anecdotes right through the book which the readers can enjoy. He retired from cricket in 2013 after playing his 200th and final test in front of his home crowd in Mumbai.

***3. My Country My Life* by L.K. Advani (2008)**

My Country My Life is a self portrait text by an Indian politician, L.K. Advani. He served as the Deputy Prime Minister of India from 2002 to 2004. He was also chosen as the Leader of the Opposition in the 15thLokSabha. Dr. Abdul Kalam, the eleventh President of India released this book on 19 March, 2008. It has 1040 pages showing in details the account and events in his life. In non-fiction category the book became the best seller book and he joined Archer as a bestseller author. More than 10 lakh copies of this autobiography have been sold. It contains events in Indian politics and India's history from 1900 till the completion of writing of this book. It includes author's memoirs in five phases. They are Sindh and India- An Unbreakable Bond (1927-47), Journey from Sindh to Rajasthan (1947-57), Entry into National Politics (1957-77), BJP Spectacular Rise (1977-97) and India Strong and Self Confident (1997-2007).

4. *On My Terms: From the Grassroots to Corridors of Power* by Sharad Pawar (2015)

This is an autobiography of the President of Nationalist Congress Party, Sharad Pawar. It was released on his 75th birthday i.e. on 10 Dec. 2015 by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. He is one of the India's key public figures. In his five-decade-long political career he never lost any election. He served as a chief minister of Maharashtra four times and India's union defence minister and minister of agriculture. He is admired for his administrative acumen and consensual politics. In this book he shares his reflections on coalition politics, the loss of democracy in the congress party, the state of agriculture and industry in the country and absolute necessity of social harmony, ethos of India's future, Emergency and its impact on national and regional politics, the fall of the Chandrashekhar government in 1991, the horrible earthquake in Latur, the signing of the Punjab Accord between Rajiv Gandhi and H.S. Longowal, the Babri Masjid demolition, the Mumbai bomb blasts of 1993, the controversy over the Enron Power project and Sonia Gandhi's dramatic decision to give up the chance to occupy the country's highest office.

5. *Truth, Love & a Little Malice* by Khushwant Singh (2002)

The above autobiographical book is written by a famous Indian novelist, columnist and journalist, Khushwant Singh. He is a qualified barrister from the Kings College, London. In this book he chronicles some of the seminal historical and political events that have marked the Indian socio-political scene in his lifetime since 1915. He depicted the events like the Partition of India, the Emergency and Operation Bluestar. All these events have influenced and moulded the lives of Indians and particularly that of Sikhs, the community that he belongs to. This autobiography is unique because he shared personal and professional equations with many eminent personalities throughout his life. His insightful and witty recollection of several incidents in the lives of those personalities as well as in his own makes this book a read. Is also includes Singh's personal, unchanged truths of his life, the pitfalls, achievements in his professional career and his overwhelming sense. This book was published by Viking Publications in 2002.

6. *Once Upon a Life: Burnt Curry and Bloody Rags* : A Memoir by Temsula Ao

Temsula Ao is a poet, novelist, short story writer and ethnographer. She is a distinguished retired Professor of English in Northern Eastern Hill University, where she has taught since 1975. She received the notable awards like Padma Shri in 2007 and Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013. She is widely respected as one of the major literacy voices in English to emerge from Northeast India. She lost her both parents in quick succession when she was young. Her childhood was full of problems and challenges. She was poor, emotionally scarred, lonely and often hungry. She and her five siblings wandered the streets skipping schools. Fortunately, she was taken by the authorities and sent to a boarding school where she envisioned a bright future and committed herself to a lifetime of learning. Of course the present memoir makes it clear that she understood the power of education and determination. Temsula Ao describes her memoir as 'an attempt to exorcise my own personal ghosts from a fractured childhood that was ripped apart by a series of tragedies…(it) is about love and what it is like to be deprived of it.' For the readers of Temsula Ao, her memoir gives not only an insight into her role as a leading figure in the Northeast, but is also a moving account of a writerly life.

***7. Courage and Conviction* by V.K. Singh (2013)**

Courage and Conviction is written by former Indian army chief V.K. Singh. It was first published by Aleph Book Company in 2013. He served in the Indian army for 42 years and retired as a chief on 31 May, 2012. In this book, Singh criticizes many situations in which he was pulled which include alleged corruption in the Indian government and the planning and role of Indira Gandhi in Operation Bluestar. It covers major developments from Singh's childhood to his retirement. He said in an interview with OPEN an online portal and an Indian magazine that his book would make people serving in government upset and unhappy with him. He is well-known for the principled stand he took on many issues during his tenure, from arms procurement to the deployment of the army against the Maoists. This book gives the reader hitherto untold stories about the General's experiences during the IPKF operation in Sri Lanka, the 1971 Bangladesh War with Pakistan and anti-insurgency operations in Kashmir and the Northeast. He also shares a picture of how senior officers in the armed forces are constantly harassed and exploited by top bureaucrats.

8. *One Full, One Half* by Neela Satyanarayan (2006)

Neela Satyanarayan is a retired IAS officer who was appointed as the first woman State Election Commissioner of Maharashtra. She has penned nearly 25 books. She is a poet and musician. In her beautifully written book One Full, One Half she tells the readers how she tendered a motherly affection to bring up her son Chaitanya with Down's Syndrome. The text celebrates the victory of parental love against all odds. She tells the story of maintaining both her professional and family life intact in this book. She makes it clear that love conquers all the disabilities and handicaps that nature imposes upon us. Instead of losing confidence and blaming fate, the family decides to fight back so that Chaitanya is able to feel and live like a normal human being. This is a saga of tears, love, compassion and courage that finally ends in success. One will realize while going through the contents of this book. This saga even touched the President of India. Of course an inspiration story for the world and especially for mothers who have children with disabilities.

9. *The Substance and the Shadow: An Autobiography* by Dilip Kumar (2014)

This autobiography is written by a legend of lifetime, multilingual orator, an excellent mimic, a superb dancer and veteran actor, Dilip Kumar. He received many awards for his praiseworthy service to humanity. Dilip Kumar was born as Yousuf Khan who started his career in Hindi cinemas in the early 1940s. This book includes various interesting anecdotes from the life of Dilip Kumar. He captured the hearts with his prolific performance. The book covers his whole journey right from his struggling days to his meeting with Devika Rani which led him getting a break in movies. It also focuses on sensitive areas such as his own affected psyche because of playing a tragedian in movies and later he recovered by doing funny movies. The book also gives us an insight into the fairy tale love story of Dilip Kumar and the beauty of SairaBanu and their wonderful wedding. This autobiography will prove to be an enjoyable book for anyone who is interested in Bollywood and plan to make career in it. It gives them an opportunity to get insights about the biggest star of Hindi films from the legend himself. Uday Tara Nayar is a famous journalist and writer who penned the thoughts of Dilip Kumar for his autobiography.

10. *Romancing with Life* by Dev Anand (2011)

This is an autobiography of the evergreen star Dev Anand. The book has a record of about six decades of his life encompassing his youth and film career as an actor, writer, director and producer. He throws light on his failures while focusing with pride and joy on his achievements. He talks about how he engineered the rise of a new wave in cinema with his brother Chetan Anand and refers to his film Guide with great pride. He portrayed himself as an eternal romantic who longs for love and adulation. He collects his memoir with anecdotes of his encounters with women across the world and his unending quest for young starlets. Although his autobiography has been his only work, he penned the story for 13 films. His writing is so attractive that he keeps the readers hooked to his energy word. He graduated in English literature from Govt. College, Lahore and started his career as a clerk in accountancy. After some years he joined his brother Chetan's theatrical engagements from where he moved to Hindi films. He acted in 114 films. He received many prestigious awards. He died of a cardiac arrest on 3 Dec., 2011 in London.

Research Methodology

There are three aspects of methodology required for this study.

1. Data Sources

A) Primary Sources

The proposed study intends to interpret and evaluate the primary texts by these selected autobiographers. The original autobiographiesin print by the authors are available in English.

B) Secondary Sources

1. Books and similar Publications

2. Articles and Print Periodicals

3. Scholarly books and projects

4. Electronic and online resources

5. Media Centre

6. Web Sources

7. E-books and E-libraries

8. News Channels and Newspapers

2) Methods and Techniques of Collecting Data

The present study would be carried out systematically for doing a critical survey and the Library Research Method will be used. The researcher intends to visit different libraries and consult for collecting the ideas and the data of related texts and writers of these selected texts. The study does not have involvement of any field work.

3) Methods and Techniques of Analyzing Data

The technique of analyzing data is an activity to find and arrange the data in a proper sequence by organizing the data into different categories. The qualitative method will be utilized for doing a critical survey of these selected autobiographies.

Tentative Scheme of Chapterization

This research tentatively proposes to follow the chapter scheme given below:

Chapter I : The Literary Genre of Autobiography: Theory and History

Chapter II : Autobiographies from the World of Science and Sports

Chapter III : Autobiographies from the World of Politics

Chapter IV : Autobiographies from the World of Literature

Chapter V : Autobiographies from the World of Public Services and Family Values

Chapter VI : Autobiographies from the World of Film and Entertainment

Chapter VII : Conclusion: Features of Contemporary Indian Autobiographies

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